

RIVER INHABITANTS.

A FLOATING VILLAGE WHERE PEOPLE PASS THEIR LIVES.

A Wandering Settlement of Strange Folks Who Make Their Homes on One of the Tributaries of the Mississippi—They Pay No Rent and Spend Little.

Up where Wolf river, treacherous and insatiable as the animal for which it is named, empties its yellow waters into the great flood of the Mississippi, is a cluster of odd looking craft, half house, half boat, that lie moored to the bank and form a part of a great floating suburb of Memphis, of whose existence the average citizen is totally unaware. Nevertheless, strange as it may seem, the inhabitants of this floating village are born, live, marry and die in their movable homes in much the same manner as people in similar walks of life whose houses have a firmer foundation, and, stranger still, they like their river life and would be extremely loath to give it up.

Who they are and where they came from, whether they go and how they live, were questions that aroused the curiosity of the writer and induced him to make a tour of inquiry among the houseboats, as they are called.

These are of all shapes and sizes, from the more pretentious home of the well to do shipbuilder to the humble abode of the itinerant fisherman. Some of them are named and some are not. Many are neatly painted and show glimpses of interiors in which lace curtains, carpets and pictures combine to make not inharmonious settings. Social lines are not very tightly drawn in the village of the houseboats, and the homes of whites and blacks lie mixed indiscriminately, without regard to race, color or previous condition of servitude.

Wanderers by nature, the terms water gypsies may be applied not inaptly to the inhabitants of the village. It is not to be wondered at therefore that the colony is by no means composed of those who are to the manner born. On the contrary, it is made up of representatives from nearly all of the twenty odd states that are drained by the Mississippi or its tributaries. Were a census of the floating village taken tomorrow it would show some interesting statistics concerning the birthplaces of its inhabitants. Here one can find a man who has drifted down from the Black Hills of Montana side by side with a native of Pittsburgh or Cincinnati, while their next neighbor may be from St. Paul or Keokuk.

From far up the Missouri, the Mississippi, the Ohio and the Tennessee rivers they come, resting here like birds of passage for a time, till, moving over southward with the current, they become merged with the cosmopolitan population of the Crescent City, hundreds of miles below, even as the waters of the Mississippi become lost in the great Gulf of Mexico.

There is but little doubt that the dweller in the Mississippi houseboat has successfully solved the problem of living on next to nothing. Believing that the river is free, and that it owes him a living, the waif of the father of waters does not find it very difficult to collect the debt. Just what the ice fields are to the Eskimo, the desert to the Arab, the plains to the Indian, the river is to him. It is at once his place of abode and his means of support. Landlords, or, more properly speaking, waterlords, are unknown to him, and rent day, that nightmare of the poor, is fraught with no terrors to his mind, because he pays no rent.

The law provides that any one mooring a boat to the bank of a river is subject to a rental at the option of the owner, but in the case of the houseboat dweller this is rarely enforced. For fuel he catches the driftwood brought down by the river or gathers that which accumulates along the bank. His principal article of food is fish, for which he turns once more to the river, and from its yellow bosom draws the juicy catfish, the buffalo, the perch and innumerable other varieties that abound therein.

Only his clothes and a few other bare necessities of life are not supplied by the river, and the means to obtain these is readily secured by the thousand pursuits open to the sturdy longshoreman. Scattered among the houseboat colony are here and there a family who have virtually taken to the river out of necessity. These are refugees from the flooded districts of the upper Mississippi, who have been rendered homeless by freshets.

Ruined by the encroachment of the river, they have collected such of their effects as the waters left and embarked on a hastily constructed craft, built as likely as not from the debris of their former homes.—Memphis Appeal-Advance.

The Record of Pigeon Flights.
Major Allatt warns us against some stories regarding long flights by trained pigeons which have been put forth on high authority. It was at his suggestion that an apocryphal tale of pigeons sent out to and returning from the Arctic regions, which has even been imposed upon Yarell, was expunged from the last edition of that writer's "British Birds." An equally false account of a pigeon flying 1,500 miles in America is also extant.

Major Allatt believes the greatest distance pigeons have flown of which we have any accurate record is in the races which have taken place two or three times from Rome to Belgium, a distance of between 800 and 900 miles. But in every one of these cases a very large proportion of birds have been lost.—London News.

Chinese and the Telephone.
According to a telephone authority, the easiest language for telephoning is Chinese. It is principally monosyllabic, and is made up of simple, strong and falling inflections. German, it seems, is not so bad a language for telephoning as might be thought. French is not bad, but it is almost as difficult as English.—Yankee Blade.

HE FOUND FATHER'S BODY.

Though He Had Laid in a Nameless Grave for Many Years.

"Now this is a true story," said a gentleman whose office is a door or two off upper Broadway, "and the question is, was it fate, psychic attraction, an overruling Providence or—but I'll tell you the incident."

"When the war broke out my brother and a classmate of his, to whom he was much attached, both enlisted at the same time and departed for the south, leaving behind in the little town in western New York their young wives, to whom they had been married but a short time. My brother's chum, whom we may call Ned Brown for convenience, had, I think, been a husband but six weeks when he left for the front. Brother Jack was soon after transferred to the adjutant general's department, so saw little of active service, and Ned was in the division of the army which remained in the vicinity of Washington for about a year. Then came the Battle of the Wilderness and with it the startling intelligence to Jack that Ned had been mortally wounded and had sent for him. He made all haste to the side of his friend, who soon after his arrival died in his arms."

"As was usual after great battles, the dead were buried, many together, in large trenches, and my brother was much troubled over the probability of there being no means of locating or identifying the body, when, as he felt sure, the family would wish to send for it. There had been a little son born to the young soldier in that far away village by the lake, and he felt that the child, who had never looked upon his father's face, would one day want to know at least where his body lay."

"The men in charge assured Jack that the body should be placed at the head of the trench, and if any mark could be left upon it it would be easily found. For some time my brother wondered what he could do. Then an idea struck him. He found a bottle, and placing inside of it a paper upon which was written the name and regiment of his friend, he tied it about the neck of the corpse."

"Some time afterward when friends of the dead soldier came for the body other trenches had been dug near the first, and it was impossible to identify the spot, though the grief stricken widow could scarcely be prevailed upon to give up the search."

"Well, just the other day a young commercial drummer from a Rochester house found himself in the quiet town of Petersburg, Va., and to pass away a dull Sunday went out to the soldiers' burying ground. After he had wandered around for a time among the green mounds he suddenly saw painted upon a wooden slab a name that made his heart leap."

"It was his father's name. And this was Jack's boy, the boy the brave young soldier had so longed to see. Years ago, when the bodies were removed from the old trenches and reburied, the bottle with its bit of paper had been the means of identifying one at least."

"That night there flashed over the wires this message to the soldier's widow, 'I shall bring home father's body with me next week.'—New York World.

Jewish Vacations.

Of the Jewish vacations there are, first, the Sabbatical institutions of the Old Testament, viz., the weekly Sabbath, the seventh new moon or Feast of trumpets, the Sabbatical year and the year of jubilee. Besides these there were the great feasts, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, together with the two later times—Purim and that of the Dedication. The time spent in these observances required frequent and in some cases protracted suspension of labor.

To the Jews living in the remote districts of Palestine, particularly the pilgrimages to and from Jerusalem, together with the time spent in the actual celebration of the feasts, which in the case of the Passover and Tabernacles was each eight days, meant an amount of migratory recreation and rest from the ordinary occupations of life year by year greater proportionately than that obtained in the vacation of these days.—New York Independent.

The Artist and His Kaleidoscope.
The kaleidoscope is of wonderful assistance in geometrical drawing, and people who suppose that this little toy is of no use will probably be surprised to learn that the greatest portion of the geometrical designs employed in art and architecture are copied by the artist from the figures produced by the kaleidoscope. The instruments employed are somewhat larger than the toys sold in the shops, and some of them are fastened upon stands in such a way as will enable the draftsman to retain his instrument in the same position for a considerable length of time, and thus give him an opportunity to make copies of the figures produced.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Heaven Men of Mashoupa.
Mashoupa was once the residence of a missionary, but the church is now abandoned and falling in ruins, because, when asked to repair the edifice at their own expense, the men of Mashoupa waxed wrath, and replied irreverently that God might repair his own house, and one old man who received a blanket for his reward for attending divine service is reported to have remarked when the debt was stopped, "No more blanket, no more hallooah." I fear the men of Mashoupa are wedded to heathendom.—Fortnightly Review.

Without Bone.

A funny mistake occurred lately in printing labels for a meat preserving company. The printer had been in the habit of labeling tins of beef or mutton, as the case might be, with the words "without bone" prominently displayed. The company having added kidney soup to its list, the new article was duly ticked as "Kidney soup—without bone."—London Tit-Bits.

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"I was confined to my bed with rheumatism near my heart, writes Mr. C. L. Seaver, of Birmingham, Conn., and used Dr. Kennedy's Favorite Remedy but a short while before it drove the rheumatism out of my system."

Mr. G. Lansing, of Troy, N. Y., had rheumatism so bad that he had to be turned over in bed. After using Dr. Kennedy's Favorite Remedy but a short while was restored to health.

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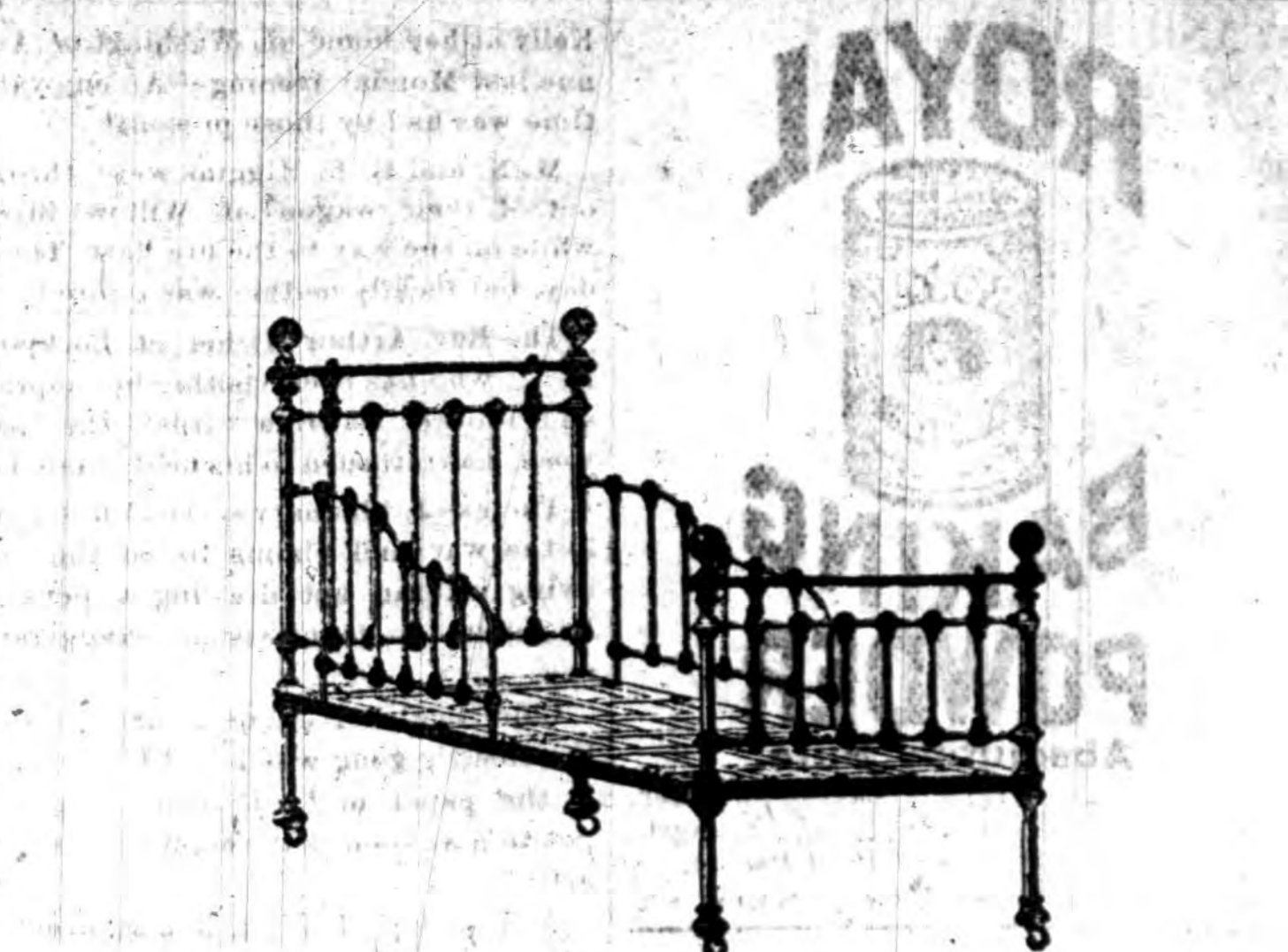
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